

# **Parrington Lawn Historic Review and Recommendations**

**BOLA Architecture + Planning  
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Background**

The University of Washington is planning for relocation of Cunningham Hall as part of the new Molecular Engineering Building. The proposed new site for Cunningham Hall is within Parrington Lawn, an open space located north and west of Parrington Hall, in the north-central portion of the University's Seattle campus.

Consistent with its historic preservation policies as outlined in its "University of Washington Master Plan—Seattle Campus" of January 2003 (2003 Seattle Campus Master Plan), the University of Washington has sought historic and urban design information about Parrington Lawn in this report. This type of document is provided for any project that makes exterior alterations to a building over 50 years old, or is adjacent to a building or a significant campus feature older than 50 years, and for public spaces as identified in Fig. III-5 of the 2003 Seattle Campus Master Plan. This report was developed by Susan Boyle and Sonja Sokol Fürész of BOLA Architecture + Planning with assistance from the University. The research was undertaken and the report prepared in January–February 2009. The report provides historical and descriptive information about Parrington Lawn.

### **Research Sources**

BOLA undertook research to provide a historical context and factual data about the development of the campus. Research sources included drawings, maps, and studies provided by the University of Washington. Research also included a review of the digitized historic photo collections of the Seattle Municipal Archives, UW Libraries Special Collections, and the Museum of History and Industry.

## **2. HISTORIC PRESERVATION FRAMEWORK**

### **The University Stewardship and Historic Preservation Policies**

As noted in the 2003 Seattle Campus Master Plan, the Regents provide stewardship for historic university properties. As part of its development, the University assures that preservation of historic resources is considered through provision of a report such as this one. This report provides historical and developmental information for the subject property potentially impacted by the relocation of Cunningham Hall, an action associated with the Molecular Engineering Building project.

Based on historic campus planning documents, the 2003 Seattle Campus Master Plan identified significant buildings that are associated with the early development of the campus and early campus master plans—the 1898 Oval Plan, the 1909 Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition Plan, and the 1915 Regents Plan. The Master Plan also identified significant and unique landscapes on the campus. The Campus Green is identified as a unique and significant landscape (Fig. III-5, p. 31).

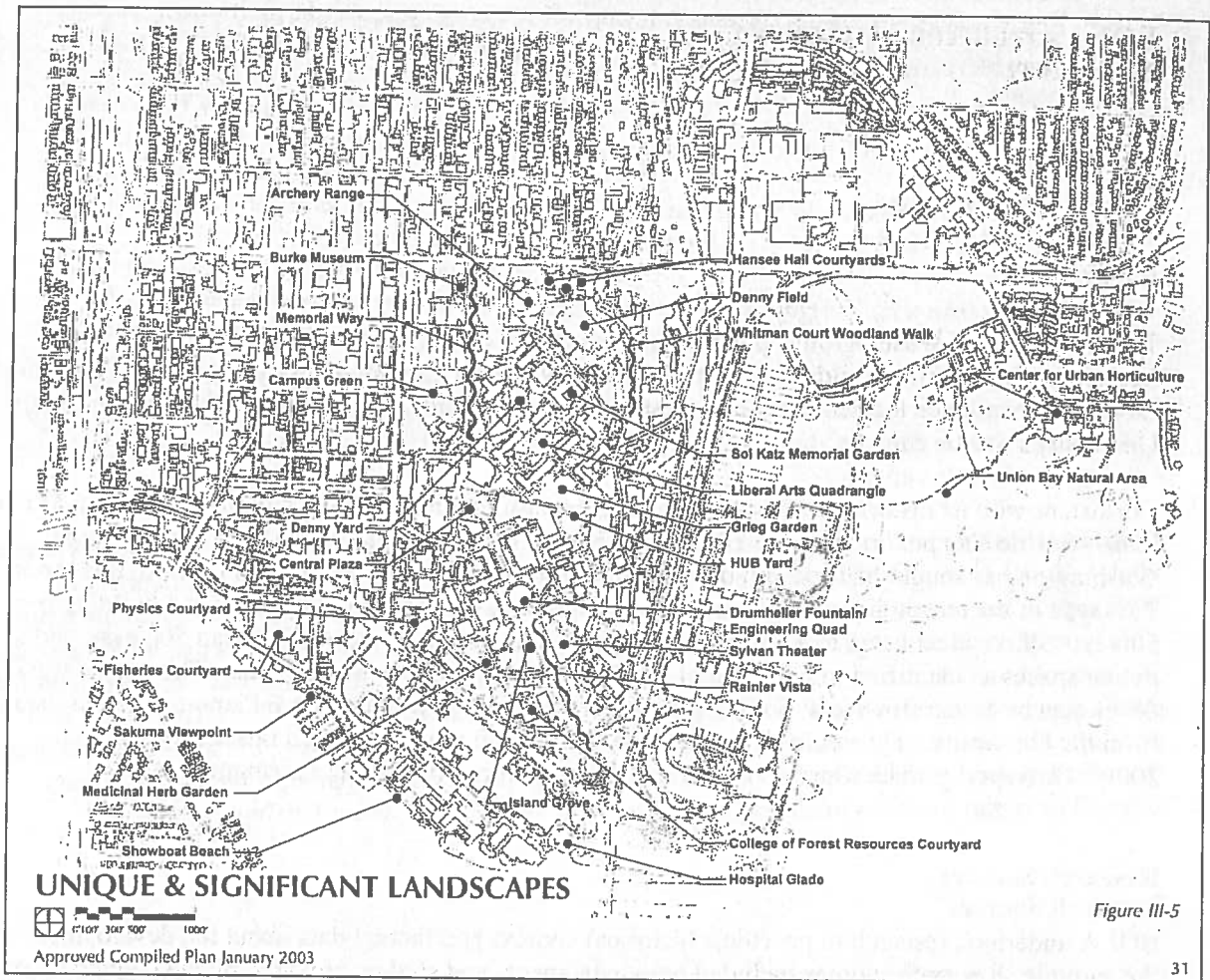
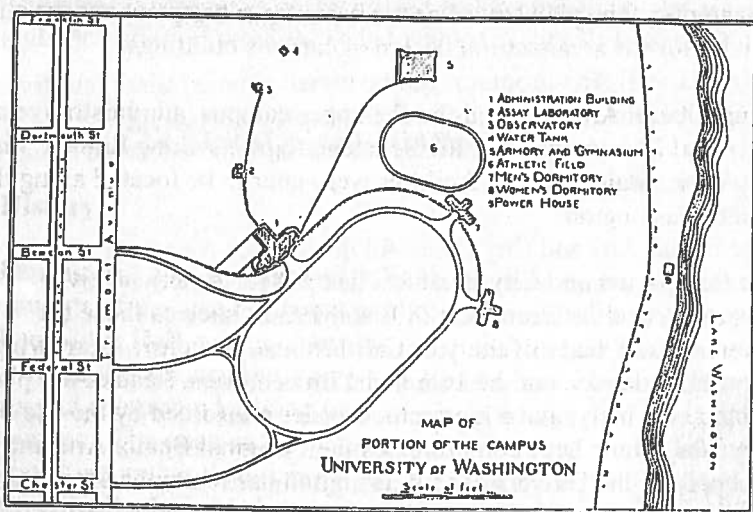


Figure III-5 identifies the Campus Green as a unique and significant landscape. The Campus Green refers to the same area as Parrington Yard, bounded by the William H. Gates Law School on the north, Memorial Way on the east, George Washington Lane on the south, and 15th Avenue NE on the west.

### 3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

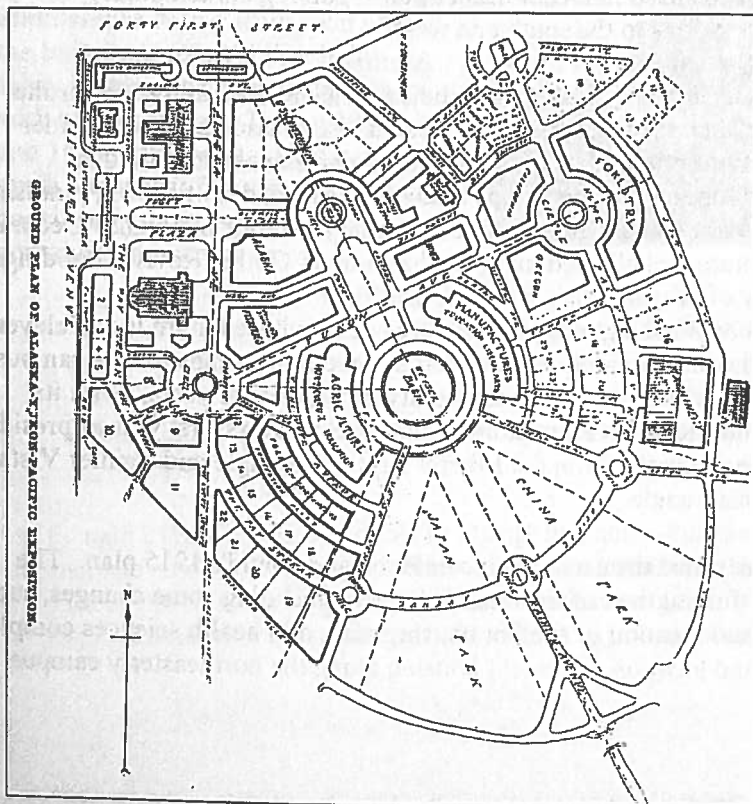
#### Development of the University of Washington's Campus

The University of Washington was established by the State Legislature in 1861 as the first public university in the state. It was initially sited on a ten-acre parcel of land in what is now downtown Seattle. By the late 1880s, increasing university enrollment and the expanding city made a new campus desirable. In 1891, the University Land and Building Commissioners hired local architect William E. Boone to develop a comprehensive plan for a new campus at its present site, and in 1895 the campus was moved there. Denny Hall, originally known as the Administration Building, was completed that year. The Observatory was constructed nearby. A drill hall, gymnasium, and two dormitories followed within the next four years.



Left: The Oval Plan, also known as the Fuller Plan, c. 1898. (From Johnston, p. 20.)

Below left: Ground plan of the AYP, 1907. (From "Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition" booklet, MOHAI, 2006.3.1.)



Meanwhile, the University Regents sought to develop a campus plan to guide the location of future buildings. In 1898, engineering professor A.H. Fuller developed a plan known as the Oval Plan, which included only the northern portion of the university site. Remaining buildings constructed in the 1890s include the two earliest dormitories, later named Lewis and Clark Halls, in addition to Denny Hall and the Observatory. All four of these are situated in the north campus area. Parrington Hall was constructed in 1902 as Science Hall.

In 1903, the Board of Regents hired the Olmsted Brothers, renowned landscape architects, to prepare a design for a general campus plan. However, the resulting 1904 Olmsted plan was never realized. When Seattle business interests were planning the AYP Exposition in 1906, they approached the University Regents and asked if the fair could be sited

on the undeveloped lower (southern) two-thirds of the campus. The exposition plan was then developed by the Olmsted Brothers, who also provided the landscape design. As a result, the lower campus was cleared of timber. That portion of the campus' present plan descends from the Olmsteds' Beaux-Arts design for the 1909 fair.

The AYP grounds reverted back to the University in 1909, providing the central axis of Rainier Vista and an emphasis on landscaping. After the AYP, most of the University's buildings were constructed in the Central and South campus areas.

The Regents Plan of 1915, designed by the unofficial campus architect, Carl F. Gould and the Seattle architecture firm of Bebb and Gould, became the University's guiding planning document for the two subsequent decades. It reaffirmed the Olmsteds' AYP grounds while adapting the symmetry and formality in a design for the upper campus. The plan served as the basis for subsequent construction, and set the Collegiate Gothic character for the architectural design of campus buildings.

The Regents Plan proposed grouping Liberal Arts programs on the upper campus, administrative and library facilities at its core on the Central Quadrangle, and the Science programs along Rainier Vista and the southern portion of Stevens Way. Major athletic facilities were later to be located along the eastern edge of the campus near Lake Washington.

This plan was consistent with other Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful designs for American civic centers, towns and campuses during the period between the 1880s and 1930s, such as those for Chicago, St. Louis, Columbia University, and the University of California at Berkeley. Borrowing principles from grand European city and villa plans of the 16th and 17th centuries, Beaux-Arts plans included axial alignments, balance and symmetry, and a hierarchical order reinforced by the use of landscape. Unlike many other campuses, which have compromised their original Beaux-Arts and City Beautiful campus concepts, the plan of the University of Washington has remained essentially intact. Principles of the plan have been used in recent master plans, guiding contemporary construction on the campus and extensions to the south and west.

Collegiate Gothic was endorsed by architect Carl Gould as the suitable architectural style for the campus buildings due to its symbolic content. The style also had a visual association with older English universities and offered adaptability to the sometimes irregular plans that individual buildings and their academic functions required. Colored brick in warm shades of brown, pinkish-gray cast stone, and cream-colored terra cotta were adopted as primary exterior materials. Decorative brick patterns and allegorical sculpture embellished many of the campus' Gothic Revival buildings.

Henry Suzzallo was the University of Washington's fifteenth president, whose tenure lasted eleven years from 1915 to 1926. Suzzallo worked closely with Gould in developing plans for the campus and its buildings. He envisioned the institution as "the university of a thousand years," with its library as its heart. Bebb and Gould's Regents Plan, adopted during Suzzallo's first year as president, placed the library beside the intersecting axes from the Liberal Arts Quadrangle and Rainier Vista and the main axis of the Science Quadrangle.

In 1934, the Regents requested a reexamination and update of Bebb and Gould's 1915 plan. The resulting 1935 Plan essentially reaffirmed the earlier one, while recommending some changes, such as the location of a student union building east of the library, the siting of a health sciences complex south of Northeast Pacific Street, and location of student housing along the northeasterly campus ridge.

Following World War II, major changes included an influx of students attending on the GI Bill and establishment of the medical school in 1946. The University's basic plan was again updated, resulting in the 1948 Plan. In addition to supporting the 1935 Plan, the new plan recommended increasing density and acquiring new land in the Northlake area south of campus along Portage Bay.

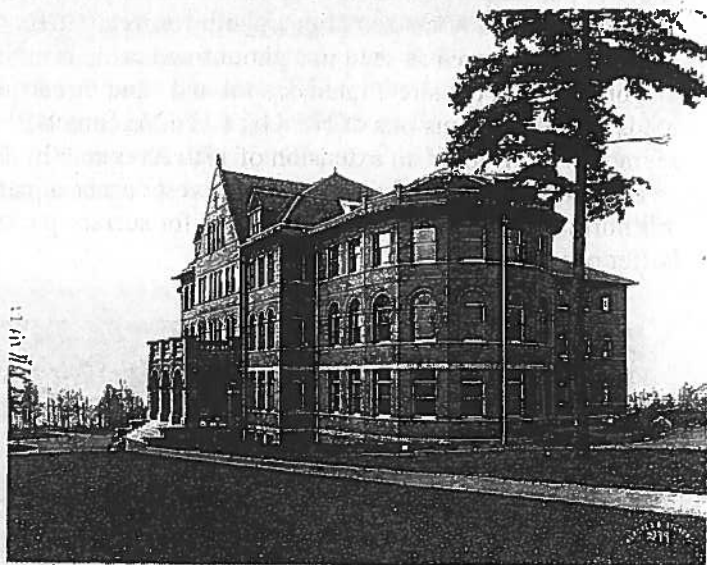
Buildings on the campus constructed after World War II were designed in a variety of Modern styles that emphasized new materials and expressive structural qualities. Prominent among these is the Faculty Center (1958–1960), located east across Stevens Way from the present HUB. In the 1950s, a University Architectural Commission was established and a University architect appointed. Collegiate Gothic was replaced by Modern architecture as the preferred style for new campus buildings.

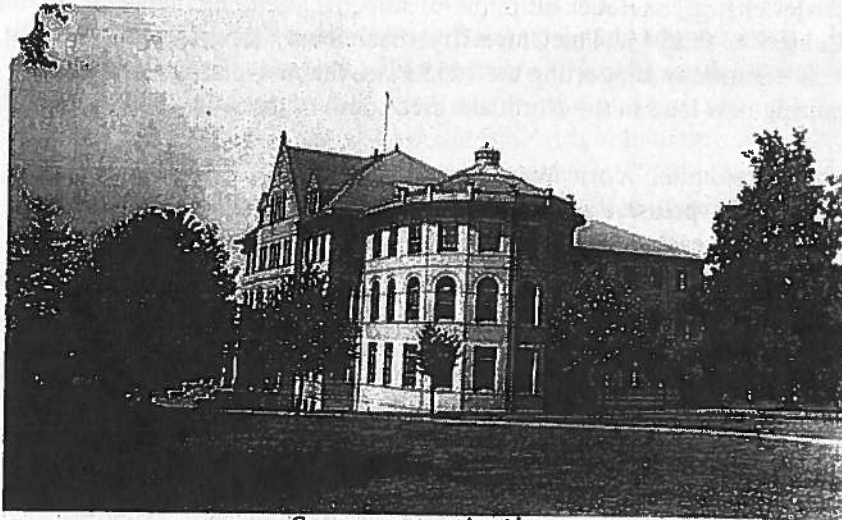
The present campus is characterized architecturally by the assorted styles of its buildings. This stylistic variation provides visual interest and gives a sense of the campus' development over time.

#### **4. THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE**

##### **History**

Parrington Lawn (or Parrington Yard) consists of the area north and west of Parrington Hall, which opened in 1902 as the Science Building—the second classroom building on campus. The open space has evolved over time, rather than being a specifically designed landscape. Photographs dating from soon after the building's construction indicate a fairly barren site and surrounding, with a few conifers. By the 1910s and 1920s, photos show the open area north and west of Parrington Hall as consisting of a grassy expanse containing numerous trees.





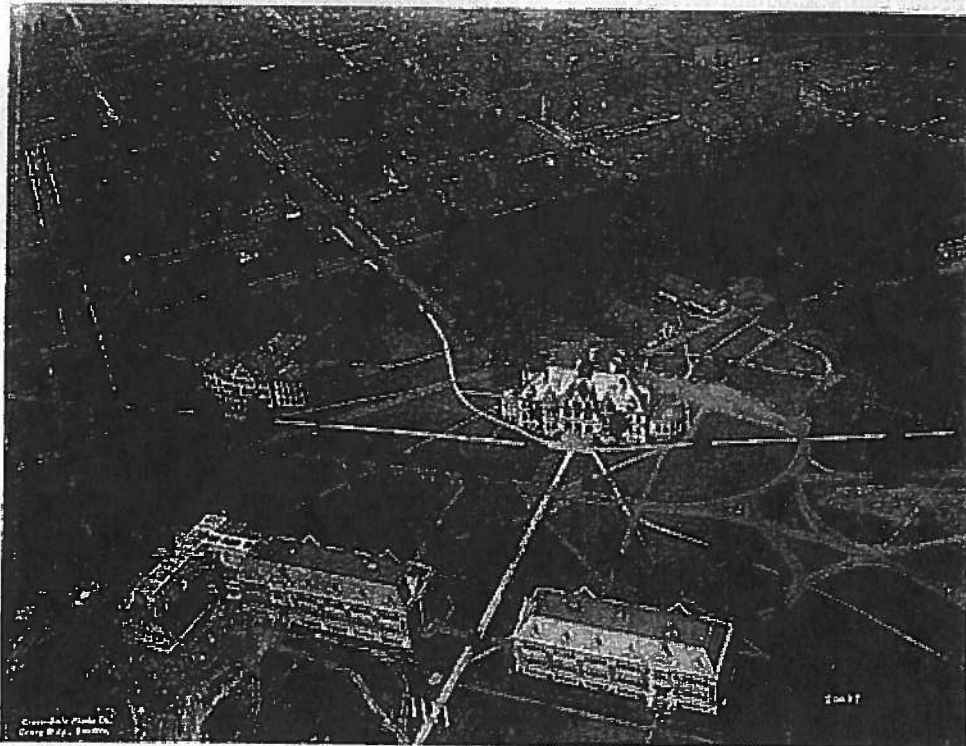
*Science Hall.*

Above: This undated photo, ca. 1907, shows a fairly bare site shortly after the completion of Science Hall (now Parrington Hall). (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, negative no. UW6836.)

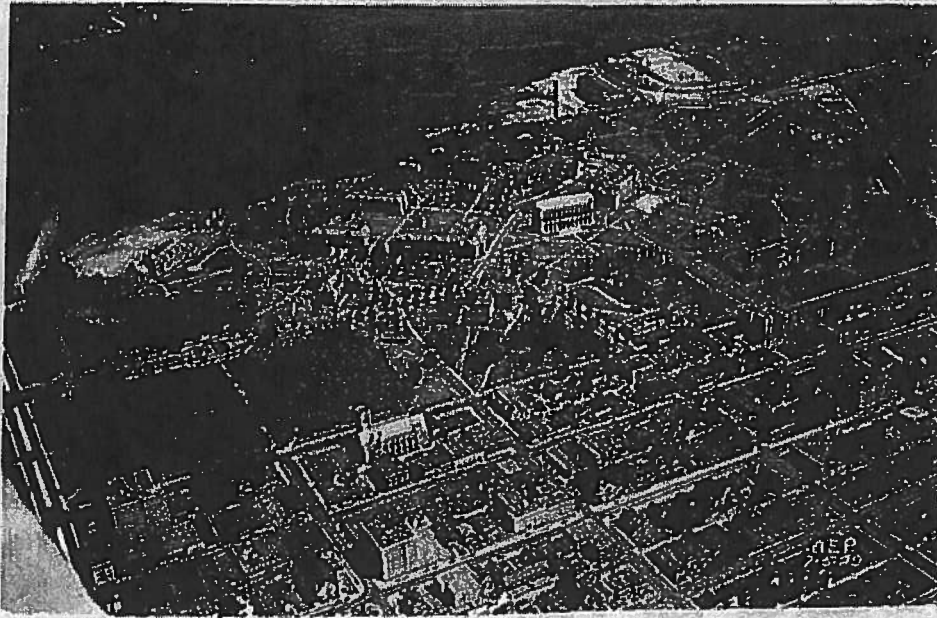
Left: Science Hall, view looking east, ca. 1915. (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, negative no. UW10862.)

Historic photos also show that a number of pathways ran across the yard. A wider path, running east-west and aligned with NE 42nd Street, formed the northern boundary of the area as seen in a photo from ca. 1920. Narrower paths led diagonally from the street intersections and campus entries. For some time, campus roads included extensions of NE 41st and 42nd Streets, which ran east to meet Memorial Way, itself an extension of 17th Avenue NE. North of Parrington Lawn, an area of denser trees formed the northwest corner of campus. In the late 1950s, this northern "forested" area was cleared for surface parking, ringed by a perimeter buffer of trees.

northwest, with Parrington Hall and Parrington Lawn in the left mid-ground, ca. 1920. (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, negative no. UW949.)



Aerial looking southeast, with Parrington Hall and Parrington Lawn in the center of the photo, ca. 1932. (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, negative no. UW19619z.)





Aerial looking southeast, with Parrington Hall and Parrington Lawn at the center-right of the photo, 1954. At this time, the campus road system still included an extension of NE 41st Street. (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, negative no. UW19622z.)



Aerial looking south, with Parrington Hall and Parrington Lawn at the center-right of the photo, 1959. The former wooded area north of the Lawn had been paved for a surface parking lot, visually buffered by perimeter trees. Street extensions were eliminated by this time and the current campus vehicular entries established. (University of Washington Libraries Special Collections.)



## Description



Current aerial, with Parrington Lawn outlined in red. (Google Maps, 2008.)

Parrington Lawn consists of the open space north and west of Parrington Hall, defined by George Washington Lane on the south, 15th Avenue NE on the west, the Law School site (William H. Gates Hall, completed in 2003) to the north, and Memorial Way to the east. Memorial Way features an allee of mature sycamore trees, planted in honor of UW students and faculty who died in WWI. Memorial Way terminates in a roundabout in front of Parrington Hall, where it intersects with George Washington Lane. George Washington Lane is utilitarian in character, used as a service drive and providing fire truck access.

The west edge of the Lawn is defined by a concrete retaining wall, approximately 6' tall, along 15th Avenue NE. The western end of the south edge is characterized by the utilitarian vehicular entry to the Central Garage, bordered by a sidewalk and access ramp into campus. The south edge of the Lawn along George Washington Lane is bordered by shrubs and groundcover, in contrast to the turf and trees of the Lawn itself.

Parrington Lawn is a grassy area with mature trees and crossed by paved pedestrian paths. Four of these paths originate near the northwest corner of the Lawn and cross in various directions. From south to north, they are Kittitas Lane, Klickitat Lane, Kitsap Lane, and Clallam Lane. The grade of

the Lawn rises from approximately 149' at the southwest corner to approximately 190' at the northeast corner, for an overall change of approximately 40'.

The northeastern portion of the Lawn primarily contains deciduous trees, including a number of oak trees. The southwestern portion consists of a combination of deciduous trees and conifers—primarily fir, madronas, and maples. Recently planted trees include some conifers in the grove of trees and several small flowering trees west of Parrington Hall. A dense bed of evergreen shrubs surrounds an access ramp off NE 41st Street.

The contemporary photos on the following pages are by BOLA Architecture + Planning unless otherwise attributed and date from February 2009.



View southeast from the northern portion of the Lawn, with Klickitat Lane on the right and the back of Parrington Hall visible.



Looking south from the Law School across Parrington Lawn, with Clallum Lane in the mid-ground.



View south across the Lawn, looking at Parrington Hall.



View northeast, Kittitas Lane is visible in the mid-ground and the edge of Parrington Hall at the right.



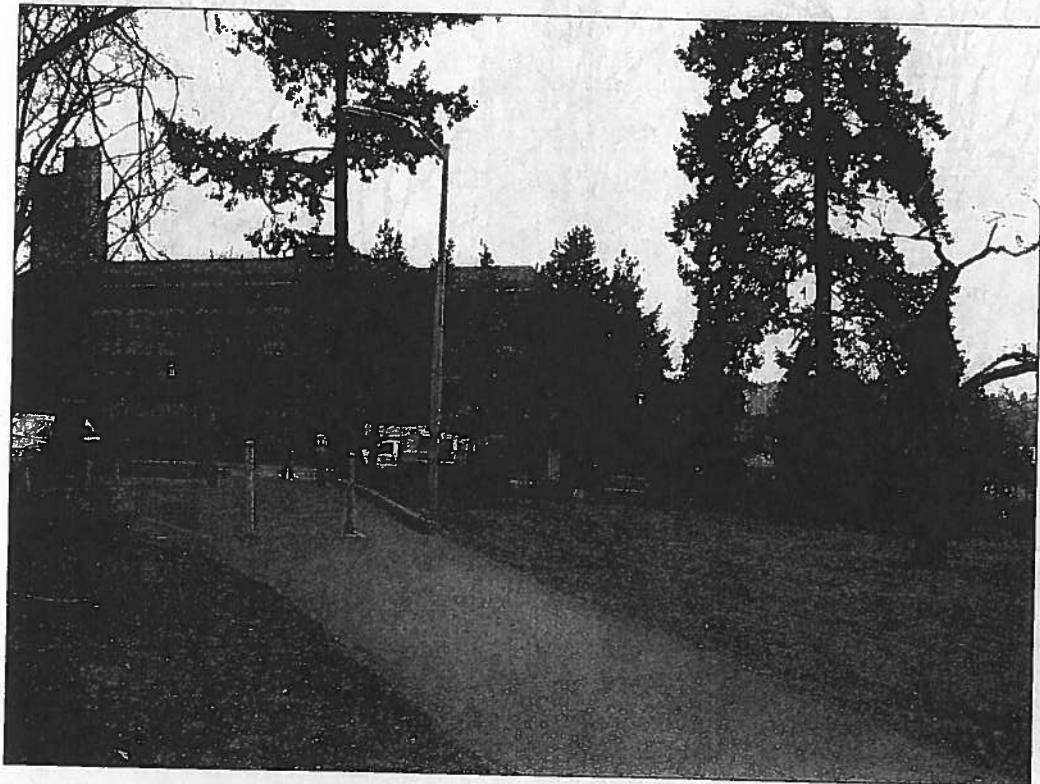
View looking northeast across the Lawn, from southwest of Parrington Hall. (Photo by SvR Design.)



Looking northwest along Kittitas Lane.



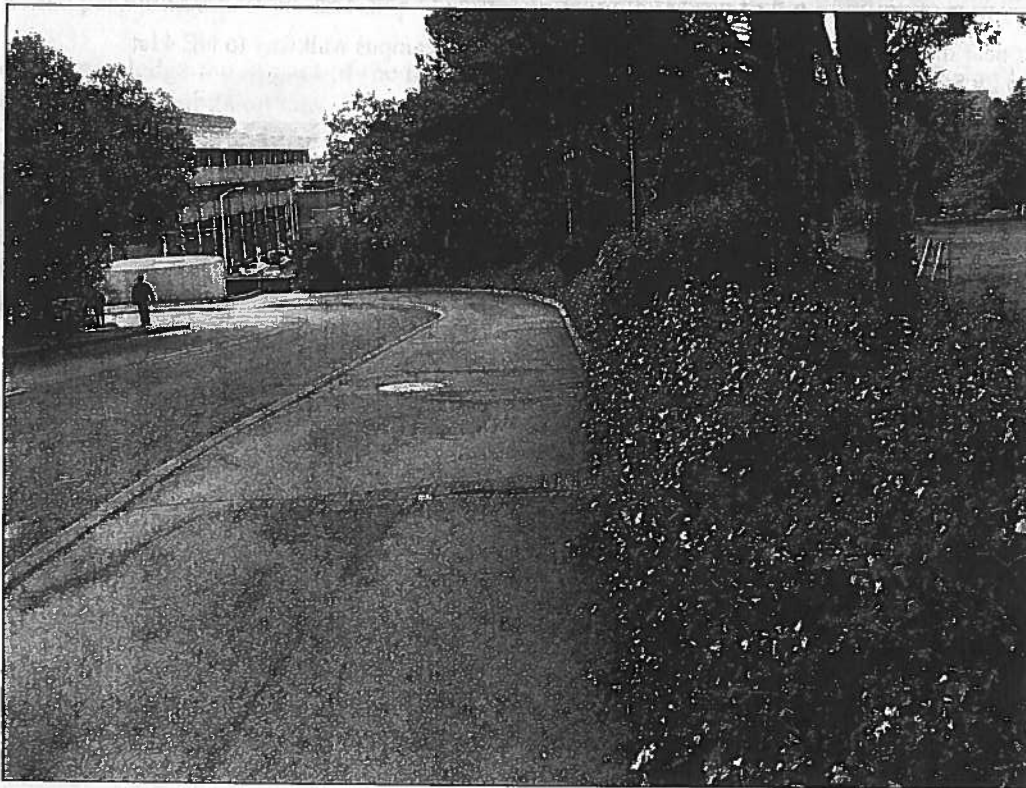
Looking north from behind Parrington Hall, the Law School visible in the background.



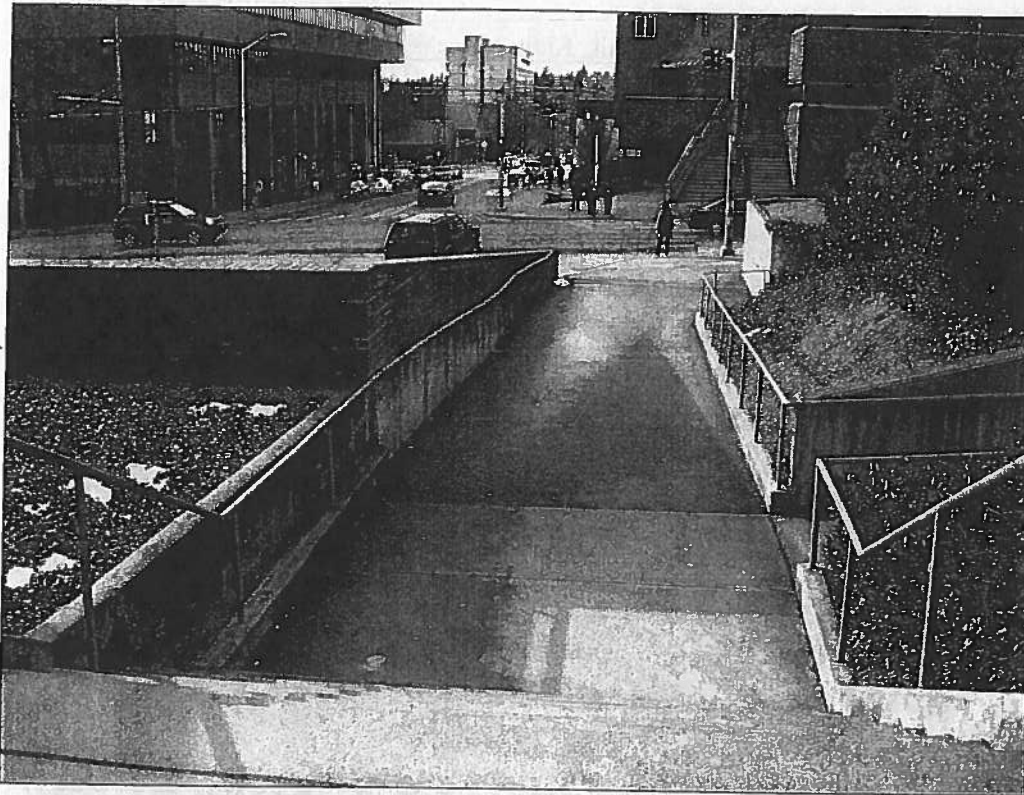
View looking south from just west of Parrington Hall. Kittitas Lane is the path visible here.



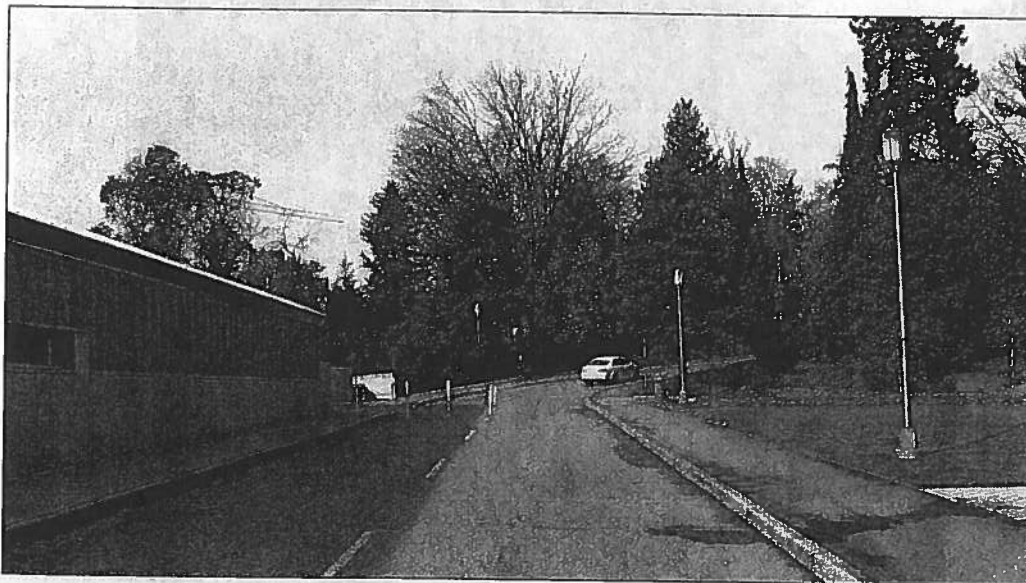
View southeast across 15th Avenue NE, showing the concrete retaining wall that forms the west edge of Parrington Lawn. A cluster of madronas are visible on the Lawn. (Photo by SvR Design.)



View west along George Washington Lane; the southern edge of Parrington Yard is to the right. (Photo by SvR Design.)



Looking west near the vehicle entry into the Central Garage and the campus walkway to NE 41st Street. (Photo by SvR Design.)



Looking north along George Washington Lane, toward the south edge of Parrington Lawn. (Photo by SvR Design.)



## 5. IMPACTS & MITIGATION

### The Proposed Project

The design of the Molecular Engineering Building calls for construction of the new structure on the site currently occupied by Cunningham Hall and Johnson Annex. Cunningham Hall is a significant building on campus and as a result, the project calls for its relocation. After considering several possible receiving sites in mid-2008, the University selected Parrington Lawn as the proposed site for the relocation of Cunningham Hall.

### Recommended Mitigation

1. Parrington Lawn is an established open space that surrounds historic Parrington Hall. Preserve this character by relocating Cunningham Hall near the south perimeter of the Lawn, near George Washington Lane.
2. Parrington Hall and the AYP Women's Building were both formally situated on their original sites, Parrington as an object building and Cunningham as a foreground building. Select a receiving site for Cunningham Hall that preserves the original sense of this siting by providing sufficient distance between the two buildings.
3. Preserve Cunningham Hall's formal relationship to the street by maintaining a frontal orientation, with a perpendicular walk and steps leading up from the street to the building's main entry.
4. Acknowledge the impact of the move on the historic landscape through site design features and/or interpretive exhibits on site.
5. Preserve significant trees at the receiving site on Parrington Lawn through reviews of the consulting arborist's report, consultation with the University's Landscape Architect, and placement of the building. Identify trees of poor condition that may be removed as part of the project. Identify sound trees and shrubs that may be removed, if necessary, and provide for their equivalent replacement.

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